DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 649 HE 033 825

AUTHOR	Kussrow, Paul G.
TITLE	Securing Tenure and Promotion at a College or University: A Checklist.
PUB DATE	2001-03-22
NOTE	9p.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Rank (Professional); Check Lists; *College Faculty; *Faculty Promotion; Higher Education; *Teacher Attitudes; *Tenure

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a checklist of actions a junior faculty member should take if he or she wants to secure tenure and promotion. The list suggests: (1) learn not to make waves; (2) be compliant; (3) accept the position of indentured servant; (4) present as many conference papers as possible; (5) be a "utility infielder," able to teach a range of courses; (6) choose your friends carefully; (7) be patient; (8) use discrimination to your advantage; (9) be willing to move; (10) become an administrator; (11) move to a smaller university); and (12) publish as much as possible. These tips will help a junior faculty member learn to play by the formal and informal rules of tenure and promotion in higher education today. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 450 649

Securing Tenure and Promotion at a College or University: A Checklist

Paul G. Kussrow

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Kussrow

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Securing Tenure and Promotion at a College or University: A Checklist

What would you tell a new college professor if they asked you, a senior level professor, how to secure tenure and promotion at you college? Your first thoughts for them might evolve around presenting a somewhat balanced portfolio of teaching, research and service, with a heavy emphasis on publications. We all know that reality. But after some honest consideration one realized that no longer are candidates considered solely on their merits as a teacher, their service to their professional community along with their ability to do research which results in credible publications. As Will Rogers once said, "Education isn't what it used to be, but then again it never was." Not that these more traditional teaching-research-service criteria will not be considered rather it appear they will not carry the day, or in this case the vote, when the final decision is made to grant tenure and/or promotion to an aspiring faculty member. What this participant, and observer, of higher education has concluded after three decades of administrative and professorial appointments in four different states is that there is a growing level of informal qualifications which are equally considered. Thus this need to share those observations in this letter to aspiring faculty members with the hope they can learn to achieve their goal less damaged.

For many obvious reason many of the "informal" criterions are not spoken of in the halls of academe. Yet our junior faculty are expected to absorb them through some type of osmosis, while meeting these clandestine requirements. The following checklist for aspiring faculty members is offered for consideration.

___**1. Practice Wave Control.** Learn to preform your duties and not cause any waves for the

HE033805

administration. It doesn't matter if you were right or wrong it only matters that the administration had to take time out to deal with your situation. By bringing attention to yourself the administration automatically questions (doubts) your credibility as a professional. Opinions are to often formed without your input. Remember perceptions are often stronger than reality. If you are part of more than one instance for which the administration takes notice, however small, it creates an almost insurmountable hurdle. Even if you anticipate a potential problem in advance and you go to your superior to prepare them just in case the problem does arise this also is considered an interruption and your abilities will be questioned. It is a Catch 22 situation, that is a classical no win scenario, so avoid it at least until you have tenure.

___2. **The Compliance Factor.** You do not have academic freedom, or least the freedom to take exception with colleagues, the administration, students, potential donors or anyone else associated with the university. If anyone informally, or God for bids formally, complains about you be sure your subscription to the Chronicle of Higher Education is up to date. As a senior level faculty member I was recently told by a university attorney who was elaborating on this line of thought, while they were standing in front of the president of the state's faculty union, that "even your [the faculty's] thoughts are the property of the university." I expended that type of behavior from the university attorney but what was even more surprising is that the union president had nothing to say to such an outlandish statement. In short, they agreed that a faculty's thoughts can be directed, policed and censured at will by the university. So what chance would you have if that attorney, with their unlimited resources, received a complaint against you however unfounded?

___3. **The Indentured Servant.** The word servant is really to mild a term–slave would be more accurate. For some unknown reason junior faculty members seem to be the first ones looked to by administrators and senior colleague for the most unpleasant committee assignments, new course offering, back-to-back course teaching assignments, accreditation coordination assignments, off campus teaching assignment, etc. Perhaps it is because the senior colleagues have learned how to avoid being asked. Whatever the reason practice the word "yes" for at least seven years. You will pay your dues–in spades.

___4. **Sing for Your Soup.** Colleges and universities like to see their employees presenting papers at state, regional and national conferences. The problem is you have to get on the governing board of the sponsoring association or present at the conference to get your expenses paid. In short before you get any soup (travel expenses) your research paper must be accepted for presentation. Such activities will probably not make you any better of a professor, since it limits your field of expertise to one discipline while taking time out from your teaching, but it looks good on the resume. So much for the Renaissance man or women who want to be exposed to new fields of thought.

___5. **Be a Utility Infielder**. Teach anything they ask you to teach. Don't become too specialized until granted tenure, remember only senior level faculty members have "their" courses. If it even looks like you can be a backup to other faculty members all the better. Yes, the day will come where you will have your two or three core course requirements to

teach but that day is years away.

___6. **Chose Your Friends Carefully**. There are times when a "strong" faculty member or administrator can accelerate your career advancement. But just as likely there are other members of the faculty who can't stand those very qualities in that person and who will smear you with the same paint brush they would like to attack the senior member with. The safe approach is to be friendly to all individuals while maintaining your distance and independence. Cut your own path, don't follow to closely in another's.

___7. **Be Patient**. Timing has a lot to do with when to apply for tenure and promotion. Hiring freezes are a good time to apply for it implies a mild threat that you too could leave if not granted your request. With the implication being the remaining faculty would have to pick up your teaching and advisement load. Pending retirements allow colleagues to see you as possibly filling the anticipated gaps. Also a new administration, who has no track record of you, can be in your favor, after all they can't be expected to know everyone so they have to rely on subordinates, usually department heads, for recommendations.

___8. **The Discrimination Factor**. In your professional career you will be discriminated against for ever detail of your life, i.e. your age, your sex, your race, your religious beliefs, your research interest, even where you secured your terminal degree, but to name a few areas. Yes, discrimination is alive and well and unfortunately it will be with us forever for someone always feels superior to someone else. The key is to use it to your advantage if at all possible. For example, if you are in a department that has a preponderance of senior

level and tenured full faculty, a nice way of saying older folk like me, it might be a good time for a younger junior faculty member to apply for tenure. Anyone who tells you preferential treatment is not given to certain types of faculty suffers from a lack of honesty and credibility.

___9. **Be Willing to Move.** Job hopping is not the preferred way of secure advanced academic rank and tenure, but it sure beats being passes over. Colleges and universities have a built in complacency factor. Once a position is filled, by you or anyone, they don't feel obligated to help the successful candidate advance any further up the academic ladder. After all it cost the administration more money on the pay scale. It doesn't matter to the college or university if a course is being taught by a full professor, an assistant professor, an adjunct or a graduate student. They just want the course taught and credit hours generated with no problems. Leaving your current institution to move up in rank will be more traumatic for you than for your current host institution. If you don't believe it just remember how long it took the university to recover when your last departmental faculty member took another post or retired. It wasn't very long was it? Leaving is something like taking your hand out of a bucket of water. A brief sensation, a few ripples, then everything is back to normal.

___10. **Become an Administrator.** There is an old cliche that those who can't teach become administrators. What is not said is that in many cases those administrators also secured a tenured professorship with their appointment. Being an administrator for a few years will not only increase your salary but it is a quick way around all the tenure and promotion

processes. There are very few states that don't allow their administration to hold tenure. If you plan to become an administrator avoid those states at all cost unless you have more confidence that any one person deserves. Young professors have been known to suffer from such over confidence problems. They don't last long.

___11. **Move to a Smaller University.** Again, for some unknown reason administrators like hiring individuals from larger, preferably "named" universities. If one is willing to make the move "back" to a smaller college or university one can almost assuredly get a promotion and/or tenure. Be sure your tenure is immediate and approved by the Board of Trustee or Regents prior to resigning from your current institution.

___12. **Publish! Again I say Publish!!** In over twenty years as a professor I have never had an administrator ask me for a copy of any of my dozens of publications, including books, monographs, book chapters and/or articles. In short, they want a line item title for their annual or departmental report and that's all. While you are passionately writing about how to save the world, or at least your discipline, for the most part administrators are not interested in critical inquiry, length of your manuscript, or anything of substance. So, publish anything you have on your mind while pursuing your real research love and writing interest. Yes, it is sad but true that even a personal point of view such as this small manuscript would satisfy most administrators who are responsible for making annual reports and promotion recommendations. Remember an article is one line on your resume and so is a full book. Think about it!

In Conclusion

Learn to play by both the formal and informal sets of tenure and promotion rules of the game which exist in most institutions of higher education. As to how fair, ethically or logically sound these realities appear to be really is not open to discussion, even by the participants themselves. But as you know if at any time you chose not to play the game there are dozens of aspiring individuals on the side lines willing to assume your adventure, and probably for less pay. But since you want to be part of the academe you might just as well participate with the intent of being a winner. Towards that end I offer these recommendations and my best wishes.